

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4720

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, BY, US

SUBJECT: PEACE CORPS PROGRAM IN BURUNDI

REF STATE 264465

1. EMBASSY RECENTLY RECEIVED LETTER FROM DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FONOFF INFORMING US THAT DOSSIER ON PEACE CORPS PROPOSAL HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED FOR ACTION TO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, WHICH HAS TECHNICAL COMPETENCE. DURING DEPARTURE CEREMONIES AT AIRPORT YESTERDAY FOR PRESIDENT, I HAD CHANCE FOR FULL CHAT ON PEACE CORPS WITH EDUCATION MINISTER SIMBANANIYE, WHO SEEMED ADEQUATELY INFORMED.

2. SIMBANANIYE CLAIMED THAT FUTURE PLACE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN BURUNDI SECONDARY AND SUPERIOR SCHOOLS IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW. HE ALLUDED TO NEW EDUCATIONAL REFORM COMMITTEE WHICH HAS JUST BEEN FORMED FOR LONG-DELAYED FOLLOW THROUGH ON 1973 DECISIONS IN PRINCIPLE TO MERGE ALL SUPERIOR SCHOOLS INTO UNIVERSITY. SINCE TEACHERS COLLEGE, WHERE ENGLISH TEACHERS HAVE BEEN TRAINED HERETOFORE, IS IN CENTER OF CONTROVERSY, SIMBANANIYE SAID IT WOULD BE AT LEAST END OF APRIL BEFORE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE A GOOD IDEA OF LOCUS OF FUTURE ENGLISH TRAINING AND NUMBER OF TEACHERS NEEDED. SIMILAR PROBLEM EXISTED IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, SINCE SWITCH FROM

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FRENCH TO NATIVE LANGUAGE (KIRUNDI) IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS MIGHT

REQUIRE MORE EXTENSIVE TEACHING OF FRENCH AT ABOVE PRIMARY LEVEL AND MIGHT THUS PREEMPT SOME OR ALL OF TIME DEVOTED IN PAST TO ENGLISH.

3. I TOLD SIMBANANIYE THAT THE U.S. WAS NOT PUSHING FOR A PEACE CORPS PRESENCE IN BURUNDI. OUR APPROACH AT THE END OF 1974 HAD BEEN MADE ONLY IN RESPONSE TO NUMEROUS INDICATIONS OF PROBABLE BURUNDI INTEREST. IF GOVERNMENT NOW WISHED TO SORT OUT ITS PRIORITIES, WE WERE ENTIRELY CONTENT TO WAIT UNTIL IT APPROACHED US WITH DECISION. MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR THAT PC PRESENCE, EVEN IF ACCORD CONCLUDED BEFORE SUMMER, COULD NOT BE ANTICIPATED BEFORE 1976-1977 SCHOOL YEAR. COMMENT: IT IS TRUE THAT HIGHER EDUCATIONAL SCENE IS AGAIN VERY TURBULENT IN BURUNDI. SIMBANANIYE HIMSELF IS CONSIDERED VERY SHAKY IN HIS PRESENT POSITION, SINCE HIS BITTER OPPONENTS ARE NOW BUSY CLEANING OUT AND ARRESTING LAST SIMBANANIYE COHORTS IN GOVERNMENT JOBS. MOREOVER, TEACHERS COLLEGE HAS JUST BEEN THROUGH MONTH LONG STUDENT STRIKE, AND ITS TOP MANAGEMENT IS BEING REVAMPED. UNIVERSITY REFORM ISSUE HAS ALSO BEEN REVIVED ON ALL FRONTS.

NEVERTHELESS, REAL PEACE CORPS PROBLEM AT THE MOMENT IS THAT, QUITE INNOCENTLY, IT HAS BECOME HOT POTATO. EXCUSES ABOUT UNCERTAINTIES OF SCOPE OF FUTURE ENGLISH TEACHING ARE RIDICULOUS, SINCE INSTRUCTION OF THAT LANGUAGE WILL CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO BE EXTENSIVE, AND SINCE 8 OR 10 PCVS COULD, IN VIEW OF BURUNDI'S SCARCITIES, NEVER BECOME A SURPLUS. HOWEVER, BOTH SIMBANANIYE AND UNIVERSITY RECTOR BARAKANA AT PRESENT HAVE MUCH BIGGER FISH TO FRY THAN ESTABLISHMENT OF PC PROGRAM; AND SIMBANANIYE IS BEING SO DIRELY PRESSED BY HIS ARCH-ENEMY, XENOPHOBIC INTERIOR MINISTER RWURI, THAT HE (SIMBANANIYE) WOULD CERTAINLY NOT WANT TO TAKE HIS STAND DEFENDING PRESENCE OF AMERICAN TEACHERS.

ON OTHER HAND, FOREIGN MINISTRY IS MILDLY POSITIVE, AND EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES IN SCHOOLS (AWAY FROM MINISTRY ITSELF) ARE ENTHUSIASTIC. THUS, I WOULD GUESS THAT, AFTER POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL SCENE QUIET DOWN, WE MAY ALL GET FURTHER RESPONSE ON PC LATER IN 1975. IN THIS SEQUENCE, PCV ARRIVAL IN SEPTEMBER 1976 WILL PROBABLY NOT BE OUT OF QUESTION AS FAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AS BURUNDI GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED IF WE ARE STILL WILLING.
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